

Greetings to Our Partners in Montana's Tourism Industry

During this 60th Montana Legislative Session, Travel Montana has been monitoring several dozen bills that are pertinent to both tourism promotion and development and film production. There are two major pieces of legislation that could have a substantial statewide effect:

Amending the Big Sky on the Big Screen Act, HB 40 (Gallik): Montana has experienced some success with the current film incentives that were passed last session and this bill would enhance these incentives. HB 40 would increase the tax credit on both employment and qualified expenditures, eliminate the million dollar cap and simplify the application process. As of this writing, the bill as amended would increase the tax credits (employment tax credit to 14% and qualified expenditures to 9%) and includes a requirement that production companies certify in writing that Montana vendors have been paid in full prior to claiming any tax credits.

Tourism Partners Plan—"Best Place First Initiative" SB 284 (Moss): This legislation came about through a concerted effort by several tourism partners who were responding to the Governor's request to bring together Montana's numerous tourism, recreation and cultural partners and develop a unified tourism business plan for the state of Montana. The funding for the plan utilizes the 3% lodging selective sales tax and the 4% vehicle rental tax and distributes the funds

to: protect Montana's sense of place through cultural and heritage partners such as the Historical Society, Heritage Commission, State Parks, Cultural Trust, and Heritage Properties; increase funding for tourism research (ITRR); and strengthen tourism marketing and promotion efforts on behalf of Travel Montana, the Tourism Regions, the funded Convention and Visitors Bureaus and tribal tourism. The plan, in its third amended form, demonstrated a return on investment of \$1.04 for every dollar taken from the general fund. Keep close watch of this bill as it is on a long and winding road.

If you are interested in obtaining legislative updates on these and other tourism and film related bills, you can view our weekly email notices "News from the Front" or sign-up to receive the RSS feeds on the Travel Montana intranet site, www.travelmontana.mt.gov/newsandupdates. Or, if you are interested in receiving this weekly e-mail, please contact Carmen Levick, 841-2873, clevick@mt.gov.

We need your involvement and value your partnership.

Thank you for your continued support.



Betsy Baumgart
Division Administrator
Travel Montana and the
Montana Film Office

Join the "Trek to Success"

Governor's Conference
April 2-3 in Helena

The 2007 "Trek to Success" Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation is set to kick off April 2nd at Helena's Red Lion Colonial Hotel.

Four national tourism experts headline the conference's general sessions.

Monday, April 2nd, Roger Brooks of Destination Development, Inc., opens the conference with "Branding and the New Age of Tourism." Roger is currently working with a number of Montana communities on tourism development. His session will highlight the importance of branding today and how to create a brand that works for you.

Tuesday morning, April 3rd, Susan Sweeney of the @-experts brings us up-to-date (and into the future) on what an effective tourism marketing website needs. "The Past, Present & Future of Online Tourism Internet Marketing" general session is followed by a morning session with Susan offering "60 Tips in 60 Minutes."

Tuesday afternoon, Dan Shilling and Mark McDermott share with us "Civic Tourism—Tourism as a Tool to Develop Healthy Communities." Civic Tourism is about involving the arts, heritage, culture, main street and other community members in creating an appealing, dynamic and distinctive identity.

Governor Brian Schweitzer will join the conference during the Monday noon lunch.

A variety of education and entertainment sessions along with Helena area field trips are offered both days of the conference. The full agenda, registration materials, exhibitors and sponsor opportunities and more are available at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference. The

\$120 conference registration fee is offered through March 16th. It goes to \$140 through March 31st and \$160 at the door. Sponsorships and exhibitor space are available.

National Geographic Partners with Crown of the Continent

National Geographic is collaborating with partners in the Crown of the Continent region to develop a geotourism initiative to elevate the profile, appreciation and stewardship of the area. The centerpiece of the program is a Geotourism MapGuide.

The MapGuide and accompanying interactive website will highlight the world-class natural, cultural and historical assets of this 10 million acre area.

A Crown of the Continent Stewardship Council encompassing a broad alliance of communities, businesses, government agencies, tribes and conservation and historic preservation groups in both Montana and Canada is working in cooperation with National Geographic to solicit nominations for the map.

More information on geotourism, the MapGuide and nomination forms can be found at: www.crownofthecontinent.net.

Documentary Filmmakers Gather in Missoula

The 4th Annual Big Sky Documentary Film Festival had a banner year in Missoula screening 100 films by documentary filmmakers from all over the world. This year the Montana Film Office (MFO) was once again a major sponsor alongside the Discovery Channel, HBO and Bresnan Communications.

On Saturday, February 17th, MFO Manager Sten Iversen and Project Coordinator John Ansotegui staffed the Filmmakers Reception Room from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., speaking with the filmmakers who were at the festival screening their films. Most of the filmmakers had not been to Montana before, but were impressed with its hospitality and scenery and hoped to return to shoot a project in Montana or screen their work at the festival in future years. On Saturday evening, the MFO hosted an evening event for the attending filmmakers and judges. Festival co-founder and Programming Director Doug Hawes-Davis said of the event "Many of the top names in the documentary world are in the room right

now." Festival Director Damon Ristau stated that the festival attendance has increased 25% and that filmmaker attendance is up 50%. The Big Sky Documentary Film Festival and the MFO intend to continue the shared mission of bringing documentary filmmakers to Montana in the years to come.

ABA Leads Now Available

More than 600 American Bus Association (ABA) operators from the United States and Canada gathered recently in Grapevine, TX for the annual ABA convention. Marlee Iverson of Travel Montana had 34 pre-scheduled appointments with tour operators. Leads from this event are at www.travel-montana.state.mt.us/ourprograms/groups. This is a password protected page, so if you have not already received your password, please contact Marlee at 841-2985, miverson@mt.gov.

What's New Online

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Travel Montana's Tourism Development and Education program has developed a new Technical and Financial Resources page online at www.travelmontana.org/OURPROGRAMS/tech_fin_assist.asp.

The page was designed to provide a clearinghouse of resource information from the state, federal, local and private sector. Sources of funding and technical assistance for projects related to tourism, recreation, business development, economic and community development, transportation, conservation and historic/cultural programs are highlighted.

A big thank you to Travel Montana's Carol Crockett for compiling all of the site's information and links. If you know of other tourism-related financial or technical resources to add to this page, email the information to Carol at ccrockett@mt.gov.

PRESS ROOM

The Travel Montana Press Room is now featured on www.visitmt.com. Realizing the increasing use of the Internet by journalists to research their stories, Travel Montana along with our public relations firm Mercury Advertising, saw a need to create a landing spot for the media on the www.visitmt.com website.

The Press Room includes a Home Page that speaks to journalists needs as well as our interest and accessibility to service them, a Story Ideas page that covers current events and news, a Photo Gallery to better market our available images, an About Montana page that

taps into the vast content of the VisitMT.com site, a Talk to Us page and a Join Our Press List page that invites qualified journalist to be added to Travel Montana's media database.

2007-08 MONTANA VACATION PLANNER

Travel Montana has now implemented an electronic version of the 2007-08 Montana Vacation Planner. This e-guide has the virtual look and feel of the printed guide but features an easy-to-use taskbar with navigation tools, a quick access table of contents, flip animation, search box, sticky notes to book mark favorite pages and direct website links to tourism partners and Vacation Planner advertisers.

This may be the best means to cost-effectively maximize guide distribution and reach new travel prospects. The Vacation Planner is accessible through the Explore Montana page, the Plan a Montana Vacation page and the Order a Free Vacation Planner page. Visit our website and test out this new online offering for yourself.

New Officer for the WSTPC

At the February Western States Tourism Policy Council (WSTPC) meeting, Travel Montana Administrator Betsy Baumgart was elected Secretary of the Council for 2007. The WSTPC mission is to foster and encourage a positive environment for travel and tourism by serving as a forum to identify, research, analyze and advocate the travel and tourism related issues of public policy and opinion in the Western United States. Membership includes all 13 western states.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events:

March

- 5-12 ITB Trade Show, Berlin, Germany
- 9-17 South By Southwest Film Festival, Austin, TX
- 12 Tourism Award Nominations due
- 13-14 Paris Sales Calls
- 22 Region/CVB meeting, Helena, MT

April

- 2-3 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation, Helena, MT
- 12-14 AFCI Locations Trade Show 2007, Santa Monica, CA
- 21-25 TIA Pow Wow Trade Show, Anaheim, CA

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.mt.gov